

# **Global Television and Local Content Viewing in Nigeria: A Study of Calabar Residents in Cross River State**

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**By**

**Stanislaus Iyorza (Ph.D)**  
**Department of Mass Communication**  
**University of Calabar**  
**Nigeria**

**Phone: 07064903578**  
Email: [stanislausiyorza@gmail.com](mailto:stanislausiyorza@gmail.com)  
[orjighstan@gmail.com](mailto:orjighstan@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

The viewing patterns of Global Television in Nigeria seem to have undermined the objectives of local media content in the Nigerian media industry. This paper was designed to examine the factors that indicate that global television affect the development of Nigeria's local content and why most Nigerians prefer to watch global television programmes at the expense of local television programmes even in the wake of assumed improved local contents in the Nigerian media. The study adopted observational and quantitative methods of acquiring data on reasons why most residents in Nigeria prefer to view foreign programmes and how television viewing of global contents from the foreign stations has affected the development of local media content. The questionnaire was the instrument adopted for eliciting data from primary sources who are television viewers in Nigeria. This study proposed and distributed 300 but recovered 267 copies of the 'Global Television versus Local Television Viewing' questionnaire to randomly selected members of the population in Calabar, Cross River State. A review of secondary sources including books and articles on television viewing in Nigeria was carried out. The quantitative data was analysed using simple tables and percentages. Findings revealed that a significant number of Nigerians prefer to watch global television programmes because of their intrinsic interest and creative nature including the educational, informational and entertainment value advantage of the programmes over their local counterparts. The study recommends that the states and federal governments in Nigeria should inject more funds into revitalization of local television stations and should employ more experienced and retrain old television staff in their respective television stations in order to improve on the quality and patronage of local content in the Nigerian media.

**Keywords: Development, Global Television, Local Content, Media, Television Viewing, Undermining.**

## **Introduction**

A communication scholar defined globalization as the process of integrating the world community into a common system either economically, socially, culturally or commercially; it is a worldwide process based on dissemination of information, products, systems and technology which brings rapid economic and cultural integration (Ike, 2005, p. 95). Incidentally, the conveyors of global messages are called global media. They commonly include radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. Global television therefore refers to the foreign programmes including drama, musicals, sports and news that are transmitted from the originating country to other parts of the world at the same time. They differ from local television in the sense that local televisions transmit signals only to a locally targeted audience within a region or a country. Characteristically, global television programmes bear the cultural practices in the originating country and are so attractive as to appeal to the interest of a global audience in different parts of the world.

The viewing patterns of Global Television in Nigeria seem to have affected the development and sustenance of local content in the Nigerian Media industry. Research has shown that the patronage of global television programmes in Nigeria is on a steady rise not only in Nigeria but other part of Africa. One of the studies carried out in Egypt indicated that a significantly larger number of Egyptians were patrons of global television at the expense of local television content (Rahman, 2004, p. 10). In Nigeria, research also shows that television viewers' prefer to view global or satellite television programmes at the expense of their local counterparts. In Ikoyi, Lagos State of Nigeria, television viewers dedicate more hours to viewing global television programmes than local television contents (Okoye, 2004, p. 6). Giving more time to viewing global television programmes by Nigerians is a positive yield to acculturation and cultural imperialism antics; a support to neo-colonialism and an ignorant ploy to undermining local content objectives in the country.

Considering the need for national development amidst a challenging global phenomenon that seems to favour one part of the world against another, the emergence of local content policy in Nigeria was enunciated to cater to the cultural development needs of Nigerians. Following the birth of the National Broadcasting Commission by Decree 38 of 1992, private broadcasting institutions sprang up in addition to existing public stations that

were owned and controlled by the government. Broadcasting of programmes through the existing broadcasting stations was done for the purposes of education and commercialization. The educational objectives did not adequately promote the Nigerian culture among Nigerian television viewers and radio listeners.

The stress on local content and cultural promotion in television broadcasting was enshrined in Nigeria's National Broadcasting Code of 2002. The essence for these cultural objectives was and still is to ensure that broadcasting in Nigeria remains a conduit for cultural learning; through which the mass society is constantly reminded of its cultural heritage (Chioma, 2013, p. 26). By implication, television and radio programmes were expected to be local content centered for the realization of the objectives. The code demanded that daily broadcast should constitute at least 70% local content which are programmes produced by: a broadcast licensee or individual with the intention to promote the development and sustenance of the diverse cultures, moral and community life of the Nigerian people through broadcasting (Nigerian Broadcasting Code, 2002, p.53).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The objectives for the promotion of local media content and cultural learning in the nation's broadcasting industry is challenged by increased preference for viewing global television programmes among Nigerians. First, it signifies that the essence for establishing such objectives in the Nigerian Broadcasting Codes is being defeated and second, it is an indication that global television contents have more interesting programmes for the Nigerian television viewers. The problem of preference for global over local content in broadcasting can further strengthen the country's television audience submission to the trends of cultural imperialism and media neo-colonialism.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This paper sets out to;

- i. examine the reasons for preference of foreign television programmes to their local counterparts among Calabar residents of Cross River State, Nigeria
- ii. explain how the global television programmes have affected the development of local media content in Nigeria

- iii. investigate the extent to which the viewership of global television undermines local television content programmes in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What reasons exist for the preference of foreign television programmes to their local counterparts among Calabar residents of Cross River State, Nigeria?
- ii. How does the global television programmes have affected the development of local media content in Nigeria?
- iii. To what extent does viewership of global television undermine local television contents in Nigeria?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is framed within the tenets of the Development Media Theory, Cultural Imperialism theories and Uses and Gratification theory. Denis McQuail propounded the development media theory as one of the six normative theories of the press (McQuail, 2005, p. 27). He opined that media efforts should be such that would bring about national development through a partnership relationship between government and the media, whereby the information dissemination function of the mass media contributes to the realization of the development goals of its government. This implies that the government and the media have not related well to foster development through television broadcasting. They have not identified and promoted the various cultures in Nigeria especially through local contents that represent the peculiar components of each ethnic group (Nwabueze et. al, 2012, Pp. 1-10). Folarin says that “media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language (s)”. Therefore, the development media theory demands that television contents in Nigeria should be focused on promoting the cultural learning of the elements of the culture of its diverse ethnicity in order to enlighten its audience (majority of who are youths) about their cultural heritage (Folarin, 1998, p. 31).

Cultural Imperialism Theory on the other hand addresses western dominance of the media of developing countries. In 1973, Herb Schiller proposed the initial use of the term ‘cultural imperialism’ in a bid to effectively describe how multinational corporations,

especially the media of developed countries dominate developing countries in his work on “Communication and Cultural Domination” (Spring, 2000 Theory Workbook). The theory describes the nature of the media as such that promotes a one-way; top-down transmission system from a dominant country to a dominated country. According to Wilson, “cultural imperialism is the practice of promoting, distinguishing, separating, or artificially injecting the culture of one society into another....” It refers to either a “forced acculturation of a subject population” or the voluntary embrace of a foreign culture by individuals of their volition in (Wilson, 2010, p. 106).

Over the years, the concept of cultural imperialism has been revisited by various scholars. Fleming posits that the dominance of the media by foreign culture can lead to a process of “cultural mix” – a blend of both local and foreign culture, resulting from consistent exposure to foreign culture (Fleming, 2004, para. 6). This could lead to the development of a homogenous society whereby the weaker culture conforms to the dominant cultural ideas that are likely to undermine indigenous culture. Thus, Cultural imperialism has placed developing countries (such as Nigeria) in a position of risk as foreign (western) contents constitute cultural frames of reference to viewers who begin to nurse a degrading notion of their indigenous culture.

The Uses and Gratifications theory basically holds that the audiences’ media use is based on certain satisfaction, needs, wishes or motives which include those of information, relaxation, companionship, diversion or escape (McQuail, 2005, p. 25). The uses and gratifications theory is apt in explaining mass media exposure and media use pattern of the audience. It explains why the audiences watch certain programmes or choose certain stations. This applies to global television viewers also in Nigeria. Marghalani, Palmgreen and Boyd utilized this theory in a study that explained the spread of satellite TV adoption and use in Saudi Arabia (Marghalani, Palmgreen and Boyd, 1998, p. 14). Okoye utilized this theory in a comparative study of the uses of satellite and local TV by residents of Ikoyi and Mushin areas in Lagos, Nigerian (Okoye, 2004, p.12). Nwabueze also used the theory in explaining media exposure and use pattern in southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The uses and gratifications theory aptly explains why people watch, read or listen to certain media and media contents (Nwabueze, 2005, p. 10).

## Methodology

The study adopts observational and quantitative methods of acquiring data on why most Nigerians prefer foreign programmes to their local counterparts and how the global television programmes have affected the development of local media content. The questionnaire is the instrument adopted for eliciting data from primary sources who are the television viewers in Nigeria. This study proposes a distribution of 300 copies of the 'Nigerians' Television Viewing Patterns' questionnaire to randomly selected members of the population in Calabar, Cross River State. A review of secondary sources including books and articles on television viewing in Nigeria is done. The quantitative data is analysed using simple tables and percentages. The discussion of findings is based on the objectives of the study.

## Global Television Viewing Experience and the Undermining of Local Content in Nigeria

There is no gainsaying that in the 20th and the 21st centuries, television has become one of the hottest media with its potentials of sight and sound. It has dramatic and demonstrative powers which has made it able to hold its audience spellbound and take them on a 'roller coaster' into its world. There are unintentional and intentional influences of television that result from contents that are produced in an effort to attract and retain large audience. With all manner of programmes on the airwaves, a lot of viewers want to have a feel of what is shown on television and how attractive the programmes are packaged.

Global television has taken a centre stage in the daily activities of most Nigerian television viewers especially in the 21st Century with the emergence satellite communications and service providers like DSTV, GOTV, STARTIMES and many others. Characteristically, these television programmes appear captivating and interesting to the Nigerian television viewing audience, especially drama programmes based on romantic themes. Examples of such programmes include *Telemundo*, *Zee Bolly Movies*, and *Televista*. Nigerians also prefer to view foreign soccer leagues on *Supersports*, preferring to even bear their names after foreign players in world class teams like Barcelona FC, Real Madrid FC and Chelsea FC. Nigerians also prefer to view foreign religious programmes on *Faith Station*. The preference for foreign news on CNN and BBC cannot be over emphasized. Such is the viewing experience of the Nigerian television viewers today. Satellite and cable television have a greater amount of audience in Nigeria than the local television stations today.

Naturally, the global media channels of communication have exploded as a result of innovations in communication technology. Global media broadcasting began with radio broadcasting in the 1940s and extended through television and satellite transmission to give even those in the remote places immediate access to sound and images from a wider world (Hassan, 2013, p. 686). The major fear for global media's undermining of indigenous cultures is captured thus:

Exposure through the media to foreign cultures and life styles can be both stimulating and destabilizing; it can inspire both appreciation and envy. Concern that the authority of the international media could result in cultural homogenization and could damage indigenous cultures.... Many people are worried that media images will strengthen the consumerist ethos in societies in the early stages of development. There are questions about distortion and imbalance as the world's news is filtered predominantly through Western prisms and dissatisfaction that information flows from and within the developing world are inadequate (Hassan, 2013, p. 686).

Summarizing the effects of global media generally, Burton cited McQuail (2000) and states that globalization has four effects: first, global media promotes the relations of dependency rather economic growth; the imbalance in the flow of mass media content undermines cultural autonomy or holds back its development; the unequal relationship in the flow of news increases the relative global power of large and wealthy news-producing countries and hinders the growth of an appropriate national identity and self image; and global media flows give rise to a state of cultural homogenization or synchronization, leading to a dominant form of culture that has no specific connection with real experience for most people (Burton, 2010, p. 307).

Olorogun argues however that the influence of global television programmes on viewers in Nigeria may not be immediate or effective due to some other variables like family, social groups, peer groups etc (Olorogun, 2013, p. 23). Nevertheless, the influence has led viewers to false ideals and reinforcement of negative social behaviours. However, the more they expose themselves to entertainment television with reference to the amount of time some of them put into watching entertainment programmes, the greater the chance for them to develop a world view and a perception of reality similar to what they watch over time on television.



Global television in Nigeria has no doubt been of tremendous influence whether positive or negative as it has changed the way we socialize with our peers, the way teachers teach, governments govern, and religious leaders preach. It has changed the way we organize the furniture in our homes and our world view about our immediate environment (Baran, 2002, p. 43). Thus, global television has become an unavoidable and unremitting factor in shaping what we (Nigerians) are and what we will become. Unsupervised leisure has almost always been considered a major source of trouble and has posed a threat to young people's moral development (Munice, 2014, p. 26).

The use of the term "local content" on the other hand in this context is generic. The Nigerian local content Act was not specifically passed into law as binding on the media of communication in the country. The Act came into force on April 22, 2010 with the objective to promote local participation in the oil and gas industry for the overall benefit of the Nigerian economy (Nigerian Content, 2010, para. 1-5). In television broadcasting, the Nigerian local content refers to "programmes which have Nigerian themes or are Nigeria-centric, showcasing the ways of life of the people living within the geo-political zone known as Nigeria, which could come in the form of news, music, movies and soaps, documentary and shows, among others (Comms Week <http://nigeriacommunicationsweek.com.ng>).

The NBC Code clearly empowered the local media broadcasting in Nigeria to make conscious effort towards the realization of the cultural objectives for which the industry was established to fulfill in Section 1.5.2 of its Code which reads thus:

Broadcasting shall, among others:

- a. Seek, identify, preserve and promote Nigeria's diverse cultures;
- b. Select, critically, the positive aspects of foreign cultures for the purpose of enriching the Nigerian culture;
- c. Develop and promote the application of indigenous aesthetic values;
- d. Promote the development of a high level of intellectual and artistic creativity.
- e. Foster generally acceptable moral, ennobling and spiritual values.

(Nigeria Broadcasting Code, 2002 p.14).

Early in 2009, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) issued a new regulation on Family Belt programming which read: "Pursuant to section 2(1)(H)(I)(U) and 20(1) of the National Broadcasting Commission Act no 38 of 1992 (as amended), the National Broadcasting Commission

hereby directs that from the second quarter of 2009, commencing April 1st, all terrestrial television stations operating in the country are to air only Nigerian Local Content during Family Belt hours, between 7 – 10 pm, as provided in Paragraph 3.13 of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code” (Comms Week <http://nigeriacommunicationsweek.com.ng>). Communications Week Reports:

In expressing its commitment to the cause, NBC has clearly spelt out the penalties for breaking the rules around Nigerian local content. First violation of the code attracts a fine in the sum of N500,000, payable within 14 days of notice; second violation, in addition to a fine of N1,000,000, leads to a forfeiture of one hour on Family Belt during which the station shall scroll the Commission’s prescribed message only. Further breach necessitates a reduction of daily broadcast hours of the station and may lead to the suspension of license. These rules and sanctions as stringent as they may seem, are made in a bid to promote local content in broadcast programming, as Nigerian local content would not only make for easy learning and appreciation by local viewers and listeners but also boost the nation’s identity and broadcast independence.

Most local television stations have made concerted efforts to transmit programmes with high local contents as a way to depart from numerous criticisms of broadcasting foreign made programmes and to attract and sustain the viewers’ interest in their programmes. However, studies have shown that media content creativity and quality programming are among the basic factors that motivate audience in developing nations to watch global television channels (Chioma, 2013, p. 28). Broadcast media operators in these developing nations are bereft of programmes that effectively compete with the foreign global television channels, a major reason why global television seems to be undermining Nigeria’s local content. Thus, the quality of made in Nigeria programmes may be responsible for the preference for foreign programmes, which the viewing public enjoy more.

Apart from the news contents, existence of wide range of 24 hour programming – movies, soap opera, music television, sports, drama, documentary programmes etc. – also motivates audience exposure. What local media channels do today is to re-transmit foreign programmes or copy the production pattern of these programmes for local audience without considering the environment of the local audience. This practice described by Chadha and Kavoori (2005, 97) as “television programmes cloning” may be a way of retaining or re-

attracting the interest of local audience, but as Mboho and Nwabueze wrote, “outright replication or retransmission of foreign programmes does not encourage broadcast creativity” (2008, p. 75). However, it could be a step in the right direction i.e. localizing foreign programming with local casts, environment and culture.

### **Data Presentation and Interpretation**

Out of the Three Hundred sets of questionnaire distributed for this study, the Global television versus the local TV viewing questionnaire, 267 copies were recovered. The figure, 267 copies became the 100% rating in this study. The instrument was designed to address basic research questions raised in the study.

**Research Question 1:** What factors indicate that global television programmes affect the development of local media content?

**Table I:** Indications that global television affects development of local content

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. People watching local television programmes	78	29.2%
2. People not watching local television programmes	189	70.8%
3. People who own global television apparatus	240	89.9%
4. People who do not have global television apparatus	27	10.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>200%</b>
<b>Average of Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question was tested on the basis of indicators. Table I shows that 70.8% (189) of the study population no longer watch local television programmes while 29.2% (78) of the study population still watch local television programmes. Also, 89.9% (240) of the study population has global television apparatus (satellite dish/antennas, decoders of GOTV, DSTV, STARTIMES among others), while 10.1% (27) of the respondents does not have the apparatus. This implies that the presence and existence of global television programmes has increased the percentage of people watching foreign television stations and decreased the number of people who would have been exposed to local content watching local television stations. Basic factors that indicate this claim are increasing number of owners of global television apparatus. This finding aligns with the discovery in a research carried out in the South Eastern Geopolitical

Zone of Nigeria where about 61% of television viewers prefer to watch global television content to local content (Nwabueze et al 1).

**Research Question 2:** Why would most Nigerians prefer to watch global television programmes at the expense of local TV programmes?

**Table II:** Indication of interest in global television programmes by Nigerians

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1. Soccer	42	15.7%
2. Drama/Film	111	41.6%
3. Preaching	33	12.4%
4. Musicals	48	18%
5. Interest in others	15	5.6%
6. No interest in any	18	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100%</b>

Research question 2 sought to find out reasons why Nigerian television audience prefer to watch global television programmes more than the local television programmes that seek to promote local content. Research already indicates that Nigerians prefer satellite television programmes. Table II sought to confirm the programmes of interest to Nigerian television audience. The table indicates that 41% (111) of the study population watch drama/film, 18% (48) prefer to watch musical videos, 15.7% (42) watch soccer, 12.4% (33) watch preachers on religious stations, 6.7% (18) do not watch any programme on global television while programmes, especially drama/film, musicals and soccer competitions.

**Table III:** Reasons for preference for global television programmes by Nigerians

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
a. Interest/Creativity in global television programmes	60	22.5%
b. Educative nature of global television programmes	84	31.5%
c. Entertaining nature of global television programmes	51	19.1%
d. Informative nature of global television programmes	24	9%
e. Other reasons	48	17.9%
<b>Average of Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table III sought to confirm the basic reasons (ingredients) in the global television programmes that inform their preference. About 31.5% (84) of the respondents cited the

educational values of global television programmes, 22.5% (60) cited interest and creativity of programmes, 19.1% (51) cited the entertaining nature of the programmes, while 17.9% (48) cited other reasons. Only 9% (24) respondents cited the informative nature of programmes as reasons.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does viewership of global television undermine local television contents in Nigeria?

**Table IV:** Level of global television undermining local television content

<b>Last period of watching local television</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Very long time ago	150	56.2%
2. Can't remember	57	21.3%
3. Recently	60	22.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table IV indicates that 56.2% (150) of the study population have not watched local television programme for a very long time, 21.3% (57), cannot remember when last they watched local television programmes, while 22.5% (60) have watched local television recently. This implies that the global television programme and their patrons have contributed significantly to the undermining of local television content in Nigeria.

## Findings

From the data presented, answers to the three key research questions were answered. Findings show that global television programmes and their viewership by the Nigerian audience undermine the objectives of promoting local content in the Nigerian media. Many Nigeria television viewers have acquired the apparatus of global television and they are committed to viewing global television programme at the expense of the local television programmes that transmit local content as directed by Nigeria's National Broadcasting Commissions. Findings also reveal that the phenomenon of increased patronage to global television viewership has negatively affected the viewership of local contents on local television programmes. This is in line with Hassan's view that exposure to foreign programmes can be destabilizing to one's culture (Hassan, 2013, p. 686). However, a few Nigerians still do

not have the global television apparatus (satellite material) for whatsoever reasons. Thus, they still have the local television programmes that convey the local contents from their local station.

It is common knowledge that curiosity is an aspect of humanity and as such, human beings are attracted to ideas that are of intrinsic, creative, educational and informational value to them. From findings, it is clear that the global television programmes are discovered to be more interesting, creative, and educational when compared to their local counterparts on local television stations. This confirms Chioma's earlier assertion that media content creativity and quality programming are among the basic factors that motivate audience in developing nations to watch global television channels (Chioma, 2013, p. 28). Specifically, this study finds out that the most patronized global television programmes genres are drama, musical videos, soccer competitions and religious programmes. The findings further show that the foreign programmes have high educational, entertainment, and informational values in addition to their high sense of creativity in sound and visuals.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the existence of global television programme has significantly undermined the efforts of local television programmes to promote local content in Nigeria. The global television apparatus, including every technology that transmits foreign programmes are agents of cultural imperialism. The programmes are well packaged: the drama series are quite suspenseful, the foreign music are thrilling while the football matches are captivating. The local programmes are nothing to write home about when compared to their local counterparts. The Uses and Gratification Theory is therefore justified on the part of the audience. Local contents in the local media seem dead because of very low patronage.

The study therefore recommends that both Federal and State Governments in Nigeria should inject more funds into the production of more interesting and creative programmes with local contents on local television station - the Nigerian Television Authority. The Federal and State Governments should hire more experienced media practitioners and remunerate them competitively while retraining their old staff to make up for the lapses in contemporary demands for programme production.

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